

Project management maturity:
a critical analysis of existing and emergent
contributing factors

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that this thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Beverly L. Pasian

Abstract

This thesis explores the dynamics of a reliable project management capability responsible for undefined projects, and proposes new factors that could influence how project management maturity is determined and modeled. It demonstrates that unique processes and practices—that are not tightly controlled, repeatable and predictable—can contribute to the reliable management of e-Learning projects in a university environment.

A multimethod research design is used with two qualitative methods: textual (document) analysis of industry and organizational maturity models, and a case study of two university offices responsible for e-Learning projects. Model analysis reveals factors used for maturity assessment that are not dependent on process control (for example, culture, customer involvement and values). The output is a conceptual framework reflecting these factors, along with instructional design processes and other properties indicating reliability. Data are collected using this instrument and analyzed to test the validity of its components.

Results indicate multiple processes and practices that enable this project management capability in ways that do not fit the current view of project management maturity. Context-specific values and policies, specialized bodies of knowledge (instructional design), customer involvement, third-party influence, and tacit factors such as trust, morale and creativity. A clear path emerges of an alternative route to project management maturity.

This inquiry underscores the value in questioning a strict definition of ‘maturity’ that relies on the key principle of process control. It challenges the prescriptive orientation of the current generation of project management maturity models that codify (thereby legitimizing) certain processes and practices, leaving little room to appreciate unexpected phenomena that might also be contributing. Further research can build on the typological framework offered here to critically examine other project types with undefined, even contradictory or changeable requirements that require flexible project management capabilities without sacrificing their reliability. Exploration of these environments will create a more inclusive definition of project management maturity, and expand the conditions that lead to ‘mature’ project management capabilities.

This research contributes to this exploration by offering new and specific factors integral to the reliable project management capability associated with managing an e-Learning project, and challenges researchers and practitioners to identify others.

Acknowledgements

“It is how we choose what we do, and how we approach it, that will determine whether the sum of our days adds up to a formless blur, or to something resembling a work of art.” (M.Csikszentmihályi 1997, p.13)

I read this quote recently and was struck by its emphasis on two things: a journey and its outcome. Now, I won't claim that this work is one of art, but I can attest to its approach—one that was shaped and supported by many others. They are listed below.

Professors Spike Boydell and Shankar Sankaran are at the top. As individuals, they are exceptional professionals and model academics. Together, their methods, management and research philosophies complement each other in ways that make them a formidable supervisory team. My gratitude to them is only surpassed by my confidence that others will similarly benefit.

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As one can see on the title page, my journey started at the University of Technology, Sydney. Professor Lynn Crawford welcomed me, and for that I thank her.

My journey continued through several universities where staff and faculty assisted me in data collection. I can't mention them by name, but I trust that, after reading this, they'll see themselves in this work and know that I couldn't have done this without them. Thanks enormously to all.

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And with that, I come to the end of this journey. I look forward to many others that (if I'm lucky) will involve some or all of those above.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to two remarkable people.

PJD (SPOY3X) and REW

There are few certainties in this world, and I know that one is that

I could not have gotten to this point without you both.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background to the research.....	1
1.2 Statement of the research problem.....	1
1.3 Justification for the research	2
1.4 Overview of research methodology	3
1.5 Outline of the thesis	4
1.5.1 Outline of chapters	4
1.6 Definitions.....	6
1.7 Delimitations of scope and key assumptions (and justifications)	7
1.8 Conclusion	8
Chapter 2 A review of the literature.....	9
2.1 Introduction.....	9
2.2 ‘Process’ defined and ‘process control’ explored	10
2.2.1 What is a process?.....	10
2.2.2 Historical context of process control	13
2.2.3 Juran’s perspective and influence	17
2.3 Process control research within project management literature.....	18
2.3.1 ‘Process control’ within specific management areas	19
2.3.2 Process control measured by specific instrumentation, methods and principles	22
2.4 Defining project management maturity	24
2.5 Maturity models as capability assessment tools.....	28
2.5.1 The Quality Management Maturity Grid (QMMG).....	28
2.5.2 Capability maturity models: Descendants of the QMMG.....	29
2.6 Project management maturity models.....	31
2.6.1 Motivations for use	32
2.6.2 Criticisms	32
2.6.3 Design analysis	33
2.7 Maturity assessments within a project typology framework.....	38
2.8 Conclusions.....	42

2.9 Statement of the problem	45
Chapter 3 The research design	46
3.1 Introduction.....	46
3.2 Statement of the problem	48
3.2.1 The research questions	48
3.3 An interpretivist orientation	48
3.3.1 A qualitative approach	49
3.3.2 Ontological and epistemological considerations.....	49
3.3.3 Axiological considerations.....	50
3.4 Using a multimethod research design	51
3.4.1 Identifying the theoretical drive of the research problem	52
3.4.2 Develop overt awareness of the dominance of each research project.....	54
3.4.3 Respect methodological integrity.....	56
3.5 Implementing a multimethod research design	57
3.5.1 Project #1: Document analysis.....	57
3.5.2 A pilot case	61
3.5.3 Project #2: Exploratory case study.....	61
3.5.4 Designing an exploratory case study.....	62
3.5.5 Theoretical sampling in multimethod design	65
3.6 Data analysis	69
3.6.1 Specific techniques associated with individual projects	70
3.6.2 Anticipated ethical issues.....	71
3.7 Research quality	72
3.7.1 Confirmability	73
3.7.2 Dependability	73
3.7.3 Credibility	74
3.7.4 Transferability	74
3.8 Conclusion	74
Chapter 4 Project # 1: Document Analysis	76
4.1 Introduction.....	76
4.2 Chapter goal	77

4.3	Compilation and textual analysis of models	78
4.3.1	Project management maturity models	78
4.3.2	Maturity models from outside project management	80
4.4	Development of a conceptual framework	83
4.4.1	Defined processes	84
4.4.2	A profile of a reliable e-Learning project management capability	85
4.4.3	Customer involvement	86
4.4.4	Adaptable variants.....	86
4.4.5	Dynamic non-events	87
4.5	The framework's purpose	89
4.6	Conclusion	91
Chapter 5	Project # 2: Data Collection & Analysis	92
5.1	Introduction.....	92
5.2	An explanation of steps in the analysis	94
5.2.1	Definitions.....	98
5.3	Case study: Alpha site.....	99
5.3.1	Description.....	99
5.3.2	Project type(s)	99
5.3.3	Team roles.....	100
5.4	Customer involvement	100
5.4.1	Customer Identification.....	100
5.4.2	Skills, perspectives and experiences	101
5.4.3	Agendas.....	101
5.4.4	Reactions.....	102
5.5	Defined processes	102
5.5.1	Project initiation (documented processes)	102
5.5.2	Project planning (documented processes).....	106
5.5.3	Project execution (documented processes)	108
5.5.4	Closure (documented processes).....	110
5.5.5	Other management issues.....	112
5.6	Adaptable variants	113

5.6.1 Academic freedom	113
5.6.2 Creativity.....	114
5.6.3 Culture.....	115
5.6.4 Expertise	116
5.6.5 Funding	117
5.6.6 Instructional designer / Project manager.....	117
5.6.7 Leadership and management.....	118
5.6.8 Release time	119
5.6.9 Teamwork (general).....	119
5.6.10 Union / labour relations.....	120
5.7 Dynamic non-events	122
5.7.1 Acceptance.....	122
5.7.2 Attitude	122
5.7.3 Commitment	123
5.7.4 Loyalty	124
5.7.5 Morale	124
5.7.6 Motivation.....	124
5.7.7 Momentum.....	125
5.7.8 Trust	125
5.8 Synthesis of data: Alpha site.....	126
5.8.1 Sponsor factors.....	126
5.8.2 Project management office factors.....	127
5.8.3 Instructional designer / project manager factors	128
5.8.4 Department head factors	131
5.8.5 Subject-matter expert factors	132
5.8.6 Course developer.....	133
5.8.7 Revised conceptual framework: Alpha site.....	135
5.9 Case study: Beta site	136
5.9.1 Description.....	136
5.9.2 Team roles.....	137
5.9.3 Project types.....	137

5.10 Customer involvement	138
5.10.1 Identification	138
5.10.2 Skills, perspectives and experiences	138
5.10.3 Agendas.....	139
5.10.4 Knowledge	139
5.10.5 Reactions.....	140
5.11 Defined processes	140
5.11.1 Needs assessment.....	141
5.11.2 Project approvals.....	142
5.11.3 Planning	142
5.11.4 Design	144
5.11.5 Development	145
5.11.6 Evaluation	147
5.11.7 Closure	147
5.11.8 Change management	148
5.11.9 Communications and reporting	148
5.12 Dynamic non-events	148
5.12.1 Acceptance.....	148
5.12.2 Attitude	149
5.12.3 Commitment	150
5.12.4 Credibility	150
5.12.5 Motivation.....	151
5.12.6 Negotiation.....	151
5.12.7 Nurture	152
5.12.8 Trust	152
5.13 Adaptable variants	154
5.13.1 Academic freedom	154
5.13.2 Advisory committee	155
5.13.3 Culture and values.....	155
5.13.4 Creativity.....	156
5.13.5 Expertise and competency	157

5.13.6 Interface with organization	158
5.13.7 Lacking resources	158
5.13.8 Leadership and governance.....	159
5.13.9 Intersection between pedagogy and information technology.....	160
5.13.10 Instructional designer/project manager	161
5.13.11 Relationship-building.....	162
5.13.12 SMEs and departmental staff	163
5.13.13 Support.....	163
5.13.14 Team members: roles and responsibilities	164
5.13.15 Teamwork	165
5.13.16 Tools	165
5.13.17 Training.....	166
5.13.18 Union / labour relations.....	167
5.14 Synthesis of data: Beta site	168
5.14.1 Factors: sponsor	168
5.14.2 Factors: manager, project management office	169
5.14.3 Factors: production manager.....	171
5.14.4 Factors: instructional designer / project manager	173
5.14.5 Factors: subject matter expert	175
5.14.6 Factors: course developers	176
5.14.7 Revised conceptual framework—Beta site	177
5.15 Comparison of case sites.....	179
5.15.1 Project types.....	179
5.15.2 Project teams	180
5.15.3 Customer involvement.....	181
5.15.4 Defined processes	183
5.15.5 Dynamic non-events	185
5.15.6 Adaptable variants.....	187
5.16 Conclusions.....	190
Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusions.....	192
6.1 Introduction.....	192

6.2 How does an organization reliably manage an undefined project?.....	194
6.2.1 Involve the customer.....	194
6.2.2 Foster a culture of adaptability.....	194
6.2.3 Be mindful of the ‘human factors’	195
6.2.4 Provide and support defined processes	195
6.3 What organizationally-specific factors contribute?	196
6.3.1 Community values (academic freedom)	197
6.3.2 Organizational policies	197
6.3.3 Expertise	198
6.3.4 Labour relations (union influence).....	201
6.3.5 Resources	202
6.3.6 Teamwork	202
6.3.7 Customer involvement	203
6.3.8 Defined processes	203
6.4 The contribution of non-process factors	206
6.4.1 Attitude and acceptance	206
6.4.2 Commitment and motivation	207
6.4.3 Trust	208
6.5 Can interpretations of project management maturity be context-specific?.....	209
6.6 Implications of the findings for theory	209
6.7 Implications for practice	211
6.8 Implications for methodology	212
6.9 Summary of contributions to knowledge	213
6.10 Limitations	215
6.11 Implications for further research.....	215
References.....	217
Appendices.....	228
Appendix #1: Full Case study protocol.....	229
Appendix #2: Full list of maturity models	234
Appendix #3: Pilot site report	239
Appendix #4: Sample project management documentation (Beta site)	245

List of Figures

Figure 2-1 Pictorial outline of literature review chapter (Pasian, for this research)	9
Figure 2-2: Process classification scheme (Adapted from Camp, 1995)	12
Figure 2-3: Turner's 5 functions of PM-based management (Adapted from Turner 1999, p.8)	13
Figure 2-4: Shewhart Control Chart (Adapted from Shewhart & Deming, 1939).....	15
Figure 2-5: Placement of maturity models in Turner & Cochrane typology (Pasian, for this research)	40
Figure 3-1: Pictorial outline of chapter (Pasian, for this research)	47
Figure 3-2: Research cycle (Pasian, for this research)	54
Figure 4-1: Pictorial outline of document analysis chapter (Pasian, for this research).....	77
Figure 4-2: Conceptual framework (Pasian, for this research)	90
Figure 5-1: Pictorial outline of data collection & analysis chapter (Pasian, for this research)	93
Figure 5-2: Example of open coding around Defined Processes node (Pasian, for this research).....	95
Figure 5-3: Alpha site: project initiation stage (Adapted from Alpha site source data, 2010)	104
Figure 5-4: Alpha site: project planning stage (Adapted from Alpha site source data, 2010).....	107
Figure 5-5: Alpha site: Project execution stage (Adapted from Alpha site source data, 2010)	109
Figure 5-6: Alpha site: project closure stage (Adapted from Alpha site source data 2010)	111
Figure 5-7: Revised conceptual framework—Alpha site (Pasian, for this research)	135
Figure 5-8: Project management perspective: Beta site (Adapted from Beta site source data, 2010)	141
Figure 5-9: Revised conceptual framework—Beta only (Pasian, for this research)	178
Figure 5-10: Revised CF with variations from both case sites (Pasian, for this research).....	191
Figure 6-1: Pictorial outline of conclusions chapter (Pasian, for this research)	193
Figure 6-2: Consolidated version of CF (Pasian, for this research)	196

List of Tables

Table 1-1: List of abbreviations and their expansions	xvi
Table 1-1: Table of definitions (Pasian, for this research).....	6
Table 1-2: Delimitation table for case study selection (Pasian, for this research)	7
Table 1-3: Site selection table (Pasian, for this research)	7
Table 2-1: Kerzner's 16 Points to PMM (Adapted from Kerzner, 2006, ii).....	26
Table 2-2: Quality Management Maturity Grid (Adapted from Crosby 1979, p. 36-37)	29
Table 2-3: Process maturity principles as codified within CMM (Adapted from Humphrey 1989)	30
Table 2-4: Basic characteristics of project management maturity models (Pasian, for this research).....	35
Table 2-5: PM models: Content and ascension design (Pasian, for this research).....	37
Table 2-6: Summary of PM maturity industry assessments (Pasian, for this research).....	38
Table 2-7: Turner & Cochrane Goals-and-Methods Matrix (Turner & Cochrane, 1993)	39
Table 3-1: Characteristics of this qualitative strategy (Adapted from Creswell, 2003).....	49
Table 3-2: Multimethod sequences (Adapted from Morse, 2003)	55
Table 3-3: New multimethod sequence (Pasian, for this research).....	55
Table 3-4: Research methods used in multimethod design (Pasian, for this research).....	56
Table 3-5: Document and record typology (Pasian, for this research).....	59
Table 3-6: Advantages of document analysis (Pasian, for this research).....	59
Table 3-7: Delimitation table for case study selection (Pasian, for this research)	63
Table 3-8: Site selection table (Pasian, for this research)	65
Table 3-9: Standard team profile for e-Learning projects (Pasian, for this research)	68
Table 4-1: Resulting nodes: open coding analysis of PM maturity models (Pasian, for this research)	79
Table 4-2: Industry and organization representation in model analysis (Pasian, for this research)	81
Table 4-3: Resulting nodes: open coding analysis of non-PM models (Pasian, for this research)	82
Table 5-1: Illustrative partial case-level meta-matrix (Pasian, for this research)	97
Table 5-2: Team role definitions (Pasian, for this research)	98
Table 5-3: Definitions for process, practice, enabler, property & observation (Pasian, for this research)	98
Table 5-4: Alpha site - team roles (Pasian, for this research)	100
Table 5-5: Alpha site: partial meta-matrix - sponsor factors (Pasian, for this research).....	127
Table 5-6: Alpha site: partial meta-matrix - PMO factors (Pasian, for this research)	128

Table 5-7: Alpha site: partial meta-matrix - ID / PM factors (Pasian, for this research)	129
Table 5-8: Alpha site: partial meta-matrix - ID / PM factors (Pasian, for this research)	130
Table 5-9: Alpha site: partial meta-matrix - department head (Pasian, for this research)	131
Table 5-10: Alpha site: partial meta-matrix - SME factors (Pasian, for this research)	132
Table 5-11: Alpha site: partial meta-matrix - Course Developer factors (Pasian, for this research)	134
Table 5-12: Beta site - team roles (Pasian, for this research)	137
Table 5-13: Beta site: partial meta-matrix - sponsor factors (Pasian, for this research)	169
Table 5-14: Beta site: partial meta-matrix - PMO factors (Pasian, for this research)	170
Table 5-15: Beta site: partial meta-matrix - PMO factors (Pasian, for this research)	171
Table 5-16: Beta site: partial meta-matrix - production manager factors (Pasian, for this research)	172
Table 5-17: Beta site: partial meta-matrix - production manager factors (Pasian, for this research)	173
Table 5-18: Beta site: partial meta-matrix – ID/PM factors (Pasian, for this research)	174
Table 5-19: Beta site: partial meta-matrix – ID/PM (Pasian, for this research)	175
Table 5-20: Beta site: partial meta-matrix - SME factors (Pasian, for this research)	175
Table 5-21: Beta site: partial meta-matrix - SME factors (Pasian, for this research)	176
Table 5-22: Beta site: partial meta-matrix - course developer factors (Pasian, for this research)	177
Table 5-23: Comparison of Alpha & Beta variations to original framework nodes (Pasian, for this research)	179
Table 6-1: Summary of research contributions (Pasian, for this research)	213

List of Abbreviations

Table 1-1: List of abbreviations and their expansions

ADDIE	Assess, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate
CMM	Capability Maturity Model
E	Enabler
EWS	Early Warning System
GIS	Geographic Information System
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information & Communications Technology
ID	Instructional Designer
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPCS	Multi-dimensional Project Control System
NPD	New Product Development
PMI	Project Management Institute
PMBOK	Project Management Body of Knowledge
O	Observation
OGC	Office of Government Commerce
OPM3	Organizational Project Management Maturity Model
P	Process
PMO	Project Management Office
Pr	Practice
Pt	Property
P3M3	Portfolio, Programme, and Project Management Maturity Model
(PM) ₂	Project Management Process Maturity Model
Prince2	PRojects IN Controlled Environments (version 2)
PROMMM	Project Management Maturity Model
QMMG	Quality Management Maturity Grid
SEI	Software Engineering Institute
SME	Subject-Matter Expert
SPC	Statistical Process Control
TQM	Total Quality Management
WBS	Work Breakdown Structure